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STATE FOR EUR/CARC AND EB/TPP/BTA
COMMERCE FOR 4231 DANICA STARKS
STATE PASS USTR FOR PAUL BURKHEAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/25/2017
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [USTR](#) [WTO](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: DRAFT TIFA DELIVERED TO GOG, RUSSIA
UNRESPONSIVE ON WTO

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft, reason 1.4(b) and (d)

TIFA TEXT DELIVERED

¶1. (C) On April 18, Econoff met with Tamara Kovsiridze, Deputy Minister of Economic Development, and delivered a copy of the draft TIFA approved by the Trade Policy Staff Committee and USTR. Kovsiridze asked for a formal transmittal of the text by letter signed by the Ambassador, which we delivered to the Ministry on April 25. Kovsiridze said that the text will be circulated to the Ministries for comment, seeking possible changes. She expects the text, with modifications, if any, can be returned to USTR within two weeks. She said that the Ministry of Economic Development will translate the text in to Georgian so it can be considered by the other ministries. However, she said it will be acceptable to the GOG to sign it only in English.

TALKS WITH RUSSIA ON WTO ACCESSION STALLED

¶2. (C) Kovsiridze said that no discussions with the Russian government about Russia's WTO accession have been had since February when the parties met in Geneva. She recently sent a letter to the Russian negotiators inviting them to talks in Tbilisi, with a copy to the WTO secretariat, but has had no response. The letter also seeks an expression in writing of the Russians' legal basis for maintaining checkpoints on the Russian border with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which the GOG considers illegal because there is no agreement with the GOG for their existence. Kovsiridze says she needs this information to complete the GOG's brief to the WTO secretariat in support of its position. Resolution of the

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illegal checkpoints issue remains Georgia's sine qua non for permitting Russia's WTO accession process to proceed. Kovsiridze continues to point to the situation on the border of Transdnistria with Ukraine, with joint control by both countries and EU monitoring, as a model for resolution of the border checkpoints in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

¶3. (C) Kovsiridze said that the GOG has recently been informed by the Russian government that the one legal border crossing from Georgia into Russia at Upper Lars will remain closed until the end of 2008 "because of construction". The border was closed on two day's notice by the Russians in July 2006.

¶4. (C) Comment: Other than Georgia, Russia's bilateral negotiations are still active with Cambodia, Vietnam and

Guatemala. Despite optimistic sounds from Russia, discussions with Georgia are not progressing smoothly. The border checkpoint issue is very important to Georgia, since it cuts to the heart of the issue of Georgian territorial integrity.

TEFFT